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LONDON AS A MUSIC-CENTRE.

BY CLARENCE LUCAS, WITH NOTES BY DAVID BISPHAM.

As the preparation of the following article was due to a statement of my own—made, not at random by any means, yet without a very definite idea of its truth—I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of thanking the author for so ably marshalling such an extraordinary array of facts in support of my assertion that London is—notwithstanding the existence of many other centres of musical activity—the great centre of the musical world; and it gives me pleasure in my turn to add to what Mr. Lucas has written, a few memoranda and figures, and certain thoughts of my own, the result of several years of intimate personal experience of that of which I speak.

DAVID BISPHAM.

HERBERT SPENCER tells of a foreigner who, immediately on landing, determined to write a book on England. After a few months he thought it would be wiser if he waited and collected data; and after a few years he decided that he knew nothing about his subject. Fifteen years ago, while I still looked on the world with American eyes, and my judgment, from Continental training, was warped by French and German prejudice, I thought that there was no music of any account in London; that the English were an unmusical race; and that the English climate was calculated to demusicalize any one who submitted himself too long to its chilling influence. I am not yet, and probably never will be, on friendly terms with the climate of England, but my observation during ten years' residence in London has modified many opinions.

Three hundred years ago, the glee and madrigal composers of Merrie England were the finest in Europe. There is no reason to believe that their descendants have not inherited their musical instincts. There has been no musical Inquisition in England to

kill off the intelligent and leave the stupid fathers to people the land. As a matter of fact, the English in the aggregate are as musical as any other nation, though the English temperament has characteristics which differentiate it from that of the Italians, French, Russians and Germans. For two centuries, the melancholy shadow of Puritanism has cut off the warmth from English music, and the hardy Elizabethan roots have produced but a pale and slender crop of church composers. It is true that the English church service requires a great deal of music,—more, probably, than any other church service in the world to-day. There are thousands of churches and scores of cathedrals in England*

* Nothing of the best of the English school of music has been lost;—much has been neglected, it is true, but the choicest is being revived, and is as vital to-day as ever it was, and being listened to with fresh interest and appreciation after its long rest. There is no shade of religious belief that has not its place of worship in London, and no effort is spared to bring forward in each the best music of its especial form of worship.

The average traveller goes only to St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, but besides these and the countless other churches of the Church of England whose surpliced male choirs are world-famed, there are the new Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster, the Oratory, and many other great churches of that belief where the masses of Byrd and Tallis are being revived, in addition to the Gregorian music so often heard, while in all the spirit of Purcell, Arne, Blow, and others of their noble day is more potent now than for a century or so past, and the best of the sacred music of Italy and Germany is ever present and to be heard. Händel is almost more English than the English-born composers; most of his greatest works were written in London (including the "Messiah"), and his greatest vogue has ever been in the British Isles.

What better church music can there be than that of the English composers of the more recent past? The names of Wesley, Crotch, Attwood, Horsley, and Sterndale Bennett are household words to-day, while the secular works of these and many others are, especially in the field of the part-song and madrigal, without an equal in modern music, though at present these are somewhat out of fashion.

Mendelssohn, with his music and his manner, was adopted by England, for whose great festival at Leeds both "Elijah" and "St. Paul" were written, and, indeed, both of these works are more frequently given in England than in Germany.

The oratorios, anthems, services, and hymns of Macfarren, Barnby, Tours and Sullivan are familiar to the entire English-speaking church-going world, while the operas of the last named are heard in every civilized country on the face of the globe.

The foremost composers in London to-day are sure powers to be reckoned with. Who among the intelligent public is not indebted to the great gifts of the late Goring Thomas, and his contemporaries who happily survive him—Stanford, Parry, Mackenzie, German, Coleridge-Taylor, and Edward Elgar? All of these and others of great ability too numerous to mention are hard at work, their productions finding delighted audiences not only in places of worship, but at the great festivals and among the hundreds of the choral societies of London and Great Britain.—D. B.

where the elevating influence of music is always to be felt. Puritanism, failing to prohibit the organ altogether, has at least been able to keep English musical thought from straying very far from the organ-loft.

A few decades ago, while Puritanism still kept the museums and art-galleries strictly locked on Sunday, and the only places open to the wayfaring man who quitted his own fireside on that day were the churches and the saloons, the Sunday League Society came into existence. This organization, which had for its object the development of a musical taste in the Sunday idlers who rarely had the chance of hearing any music during the week, has now become a very important factor in London's musical progress. During the past year this society alone has given a total of 381 concerts, mostly oratorio performances.

There are the districts of Leytonstone, Clapton, Finsbury Highgate, Hampstead, Willesden, Halloway, Highbury, Kingsland, Dalston, Bromley, Stepney, Ealing, Acton, Kensington, Greenwich, Blackheath, New Cross, Peckham, Camberwell, Kennington, Hammersmith, Chiswick, Lunnerybury, Brentford, Barnes, Richmond, Chelsea, Wandsworth, Putney, Clapham, Dulwich, Sydenham, Streatham, among the more important districts and suburbs of the vast city of London. Each one of these sub-centres has its Philharmonic Society or its Choral Union, which not only helps the local amateur to develop his latent musical ability as a choral singer or an orchestral player, but brings the art of the great metropolitan soloists to the very doors of the people. One of the finest performances of Berlioz's "Faust" I ever heard was rendered by one of these North London suburban choirs of a purely local character and reputation.

The Händel Festival held in the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, every three years, with a chorus, orchestra and organ—5,000 performers in all—affords one the opportunity of hearing the most massive choral effects. The London Choral Union, conducted by Arthur Fagge, gives its concerts in the Queen's Hall.* More

* The celebrated veteran conductor, August Manns, has for twenty or more years directed the Händel Festivals, the greatest musical gatherings of the kind the world has ever known, but he has of late handed his baton over to the younger arm of Dr. Cowen, who each season leads similar large forces of massed choral and orchestral players at Crystal Palace.

This surprising list—surely already more extensive than any other community in the world can boast of—is not complete, however, with-

satisfactory, however, is the regular season of eight concerts of the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society, Kensington, where as successor to the late Sir Joseph Barnby, Sir Frederick Bridge directs a choir and orchestra of 1,000 performers.

During the past season there have been 80 performances of grand opera at Covent Garden Royal Opera, of which the most important were three performances, under Hans Richter's direction, of Wagner's complete "Ring" without cuts,—requiring 12 days. The Moody-Manners Opera Company also gave 35 performances of grand opera in English in the same theatre, later in the same season.*

There are usually from six to ten theatres in London devoted to comic operas and musical plays. During the past season there have been about 3,000 performances of these at the Savoy, Gaiety, Terry's, Daly's, Prince of Wales's, Lyric, Apollo, Shaftesbury, Adelphi and Vaudeville theatres. For the dramatic productions of Sir Henry Irving, Beerbohm Tree, George Alexander and other leading actors, the foremost composers are requisitioned to write appropriate music for an orchestra numerous enough to pass muster as a symphony orchestra in the provinces. The Palace, the Alhambra, and the Empire variety theatres boast three of the finest orchestras in London. The humble artisan who pays his modest sixpence for a gallery seat can hear these superb bands of

out a few additions; there are in and around and about the London of which the ordinary sight-seer knows nothing flourishing choral societies at the great popular resorts of the lower classes at Alexandra Palace in the North and the People's Palace in East London, and excellent choral bodies in Central and South London, St. Margaret's, St. Martin's, Finchley, East Finchley, Hatcham, Lewisham, Marlborough, Streatham Hill, Willesden Green, besides the Loughton Choral Society and Mr. Croager's Musical Society; added to which the following districts, Bermondsey, Bishopsgate, Borough, Brixton, and Manor Park, support—and entirely by the efforts of local amateurs—not only choruses, but orchestras as well, for their annual course of concerts.

The constant visits of bodies of singers from foreign countries to the great halls of London are supplemented by frequent opportunities of hearing in the metropolis the choirs from native towns, such as Leeds, Birmingham, or Sheffield, three of the finest festival bodies in existence, who may be brought to London for especial occasions.—D. B.

* Whatever the reason may be, operatic conditions are practically identical in London and New York. For years the two cities had the same grand opera—management, artists, conductors, chorus, and ballet—but of late a differentiation has become apparent; yet London, notwithstanding the efforts of the Carl Rosa Company and Mr. E. C. Hedmond to cultivate the popular taste for grand opera in English, has been even less successful than New York.—D. B.

sixty skilled performers six nights in the week all the year round. All the many music-halls (variety theatres) of London possess good orchestras, but the Empire and Alhambra are distinguished for the brilliancy of their elaborate ballets, for which Sir Arthur Sullivan and other famous composers have written music.

The "chamber concerts," so called, including string quartets, violin, piano and other solo instrumental recitals, can literally be counted by hundreds. The most important quartet in London at present is Johann Kruse's,—an organization which gave some forty concerts last season.* Not long ago, I noticed nine piano recitals announced for one day. It would be almost impossible to give the exact number of organ recitals. Baedeker says that London has 1,400 churches, and it is probable that most, if not all, of these places of worship add something to the vast total of the musical influences of London.

A popular, though not very elevating, form of musical entertainment, is the ballad concert. These concerts are organized and financed by some of the wealthier publishers of cheap sentimental songs, for the exploiting of their wares for the ubiquitous musical trifle. The performances as a rule are excellent, for the best artists are engaged; but the programmes are of the flimsiest nature. It is an unfortunate contest between commercialism and art, in which art, as usual, is worsted.†

* First and foremost among the factors for good in the musical instrumental world of London must be placed the great violinist, Joseph Joachim, whose visits to England have continued for over fifty years, for over half of which time he headed, as in Berlin, his celebrated quartet at the Saturday and Monday "Popular Concerts" at St. James's Hall, where, seconded often by Lady Hallé and the great 'cellist, Alfred Piatti, he reigned supreme, and still holds his place in the affectionate admiration of every music-lover. "Imitation is the sincerest flattery," and the result is a gratifying increase in the number of organizations for the cultivation of chamber music. The following are the principal among a number: Miss Sloman's, Mr. Barnes's, and Mr. Phillips's Chamber Concerts; the Century Concerts; the Wesley String Quintet; the Chaplin Trio; the Mozart Society; the concert parties of Miss Thomas and Miss Marshall and Mr. Clinton. The twelve "Broadwood" concerts yearly bring out the finest pianists, instrumentalists, and vocalists in music of this character. To these must be added the suburban districts of Surbiton, Crogdon, Woodford Green, and West Norwood, where organizations exist for the express purpose of enjoying each year a series of concerts of string quartets played by artists of repute.—D. B.

† Among singers of distinction Georg Henschel and his talented wife led the way out of bondage to the ballad into the loveliest pathways of the ample fields of song, and were followed ere long by the younger vocal artists who brought forward not only the classics, but the best of contemporary music.—D. B.

Then there are "The Magpies" and other small choirs and part-song singers; and antiquarian societies which strive to resuscitate the lute and virginal and perpetuate the tinkling harpsichord.*

A more reassuring feature of London's musical activity is the enormous number of orchestral concerts. Mention must first be made of the venerable Philharmonic Society, organized in the year 1813, and including in its list of conductors the names of Cherubini, Spohr, Weber, Mendelssohn, Wagner, to say nothing of the later-day celebrities. Dr. Frederic Cowen at present conducts the Philharmonic Society's eight annual concerts. Though of recent origin, the Queen's Hall Symphony Orchestra, so ably conducted by Mr. Henry J. Wood, is the most potent factor for musical good in London to-day. This magnificent orchestra gives Symphony Concerts on Saturday and Sunday afternoons throughout the season. During the late summer season, the season when Londoners speak of London as "empty," the Queen's Hall Orchestra gave a series of Promenade Concerts nightly, Sundays excepted, from about the middle of August to the end of October,—concerts of the highest excellence, at which all the great symphonies, overtures, suites, and symphonic poems were to be heard for the ludicrously low price of about fourpence a concert, by subscription for a season ticket. Then there are the Richter orchestral concerts, for many years held in St. James's Hall, but transferred to the Queen's Hall since Dr. Richter took up his residence in England and began to bring his Manchester orchestra to London. Last season there was the Beethoven Festival, conducted by Felix Weingartner of Berlin; and the Strauss Festival, for which the Concertgebou Orchestra of Amsterdam was brought to London, conducted, for the greater part of the Festival, by Richard Strauss himself.

* "The Magpies" is a unique body of amateurs, ladies and gentlemen of the highest social standing, who give concerts of the most exacting class of ancient and modern music for mixed voices before an audience which for brilliancy and intelligence cannot be equalled in the world.

In Upper Norwood there is a club for the study of the same class of music; while the Stock Exchange, West London, and Munro Davidson's male voice choirs do excellent work in that field, and the Meister Glee Singers hold the foremost place as entertainers among the numerous male quartets to be heard in London.

Antiquarians are well acquainted with Mr. Dohnetsch and his old instruments, while the Plain Song and Crystal Palace Historical societies do much to keep alive an interest in artistic conditions of past centuries.—D. B.

The famous Manheim Orchestra recently gave a series of splendid concerts in St. James's Hall, consisting principally of works by Brahms. The Parisian orchestras of Lamoureux and Colonne are familiar friends and welcome visitors of the London musical public. During the past few years there is hardly a conductor of note who has not had the opportunity of wielding the batôn in the British metropolis.*

The amateur orchestras of London are numerous and excellent. The Royal Amateur Orchestra, conducted by Ernest Ford, is under the patronage of the King.

The Strolling Players' Amateur Orchestra, conducted by the well-known vocal authority, William Shakespeare, has enough patrons to fill the Queen's Hall six times a year. The Westminster Orchestral Society, which I have the honor of directing, is under the patronage of Queen Alexandra. This society has recently been transferred from the old Westminster to the more musical Kensington. The North London Amateur Orchestra, conducted by Lennox Clayton, taps a district untouched by the other orchestras. The same may be said of the Stock Exchange Amateur Orchestra, conducted so excellently by Arthur Payne, the concert-master of Henry J. Wood's Queen's Hall Symphony Orchestra. Herr Sach's Amateur Orchestra affords admirable opportunities for students seeking orchestral experience. The influence of these orchestral rehearsals for good on the musical understanding of the participants in them cannot be estimated.†

The open-air concerts are equally numerous. Statistics concerning the Royal parks—Hyde, Regent's, St. James's—and a few others, are difficult to obtain. In these three most important

* Among the number of celebrated conductors are also Tchaikowsky, Grieg, Mottl, Levi, Nickish, Paur, and Siegfried Wagner, and others from every country of Europe, with or without their own orchestras, and including our own Mr. Sousa and his band, and Strauss, the waltz king, with his instrumentalists. The English Channel has but small terrors in its two hours' passage, and London holds out its lures more than ever to the foreigner.—D. B.

† The grand work done for London at Crystal Palace for many decades by August Manns and his splendid orchestra, at his Saturday afternoon and other concerts, must not be forgotten because the veteran is taking his well-earned repose after half a century of noble effort; but the scene of Mr. Manns's labors is now filled with the sound of Mr. Hedgecock's amateur orchestra, and in other districts of suburban London orchestras are supported by Brockwell, Muswell Hill and Woolwich; and in London proper the Saturday orchestral concerts conducted by Mr. O'Brien continue through six months of the year.—D. B.

parks of London, the military band concerts are certainly not proportionately less numerous than are the band concerts in the many parks under the control of the London County Council. During six months of last year the Council provided 1,250 band concerts in the parks and open spaces of London.

The requirements of the student of music are amply provided for. There are about a dozen musical academies; and the usual number of pretentious and more or less meritorious small colleges and academies; and an imposing army of private teachers.*

Prophesying is futile. But when the English Beethoven arises, the Emerson of the future will see in the seething activity of the musical life of to-day sufficient cause for the appearance of the great man.

CLARENCE LUCAS.

What constitutes an art-centre? Sufficient interest in art among a sufficient number of people whose work it is, as creators or exponents, to attract others like-minded as coworkers or disciples and so to form a nucleus of enthusiasts whose influence carries a more than ephemeral conviction into the great world of art. Weimar was such a music-centre; Florence in painting and Boston in literature hold enviable reputations, while Paris and certain cities of Germany are undoubted centres of dramatic and operatic art.

After reading Mr. Lucas's remarkable article it were, indeed, well-nigh impossible for the veriest partisan to ignore the astounding mass of facts he brings to our notice, or to refrain from according to London, the capital city of the greatest empire the world ever saw, the recognition which is its due of its true place as the principal centre of the musical life of our times.

Mr. Lucas has confessed to me that though immersed in music as composer, teacher, conductor and critic of one of London's

* There is scarce an end to the list of private schools of music in the great metropolis, but it is well to enumerate some of the more important public schools of the minor grades. The Royal Military School, Trinity College, London Music School, South London Institute of Music, Tonic Sol-Fa College, Crystal Palace School, Virgil Piano School, Royal Normal College and Academy for the Blind, the Victoria College, Incorporated Staff-sight-singing College, and the Goldsmith's Company Institute all do good work, but the Royal Academy and Royal College not only uphold the highest standards, but send examiners each year all over the world-wide British dominions to select for admission, after exhaustive examination, only the most talented pupils from whatsoever land they may come to these great schools.—D. B.

great daily papers, he was nevertheless quite unaware of the musical growth of the metropolis until he began, at my suggestion, to test the accuracy of my pronouncement as to London's supremacy. He had been in the position of the man who "could not see the forest for the trees"; but a few excursions out of the beaten tracks of Piccadilly, Langham Place, and Covent Garden gave him a wider view of the subject, and led him into regions practically unexplored yet replete with interest and unadvertised but none the less high art. How truly has it been remarked that there is many a delightful evening passed which is not mentioned in the newspapers!

He was familiar with the doings of the Händel Society, the festivals of the Bach Choir at Queen's Hall, which a few seasons ago brought all musical England together, and appreciates without doubt the necessity for the cultivation of the classics and the reason for the existence not only of interest in every phase of musical life of the past among amateurs of wide knowledge, but of such organizations as will bring the simpler forms of the art to the understandings of the general and less musical public who are unable to digest the complications of the later-day composer; but it remained for him to point out how deeply the love of music of which we read as pervading England of the olden-time had continued and been handed down to the descendants of the Elizabethan age.

Time was when, as we read, every person of culture was expected to be able to take his or her part in the glee or round or catch, and though this form of after-dinner amusement no longer subsists, the custom of domestic music of some sort of an evening remains in most middle-class English families. God save the mark and the family! But this only shows the inherent desire on the part of the populace to give vent to a natural impulse not quite as spontaneous as that of Italy, or as finely developed as that of Germany, but for that very reason it is that for two hundred years the best talent among singers and instrumentalists has been imported from foreign lands to feed the insatiable craving for music in London, where, nevertheless, there is no more than the average proportion of untuneful souls who never could enjoy a concourse of sweet sounds though the angels struck their immortal harps till Gabriel's final fanfare.

The famous advice of Lord Chesterfield to his nephew, "if you

wish to hear music by all means pay some one to fiddle for you, but by no means fiddle yourself," is in these days a dead letter; ladies and gentlemen of the best families in the land not only fiddle, but sing and play the piano and other instruments in public, one of the late Queen Victoria's daughters appearing in the chorus of a celebrated vocal society, and another of her kinswomen being a semi-professional vocalist. A great lady of title had until recently a very fine orchestra of amateurs, her personal friends, which gave excellent public concerts. The private entertainments at which every available musician from celebrated operatic stars and musicians are welcomed and received as friends are literally uncountable.

The musical libraries and collections at the British and South Kensington museums and the Royal College of Music are world-famed; indeed, all that is and has ever been in her history is dearly prized and belongs to England forever, and London is the Mecca of every English and Colonial mind throughout the world. What Jerusalem was to the Jew, and Rome to the Roman, so is London to the Briton of to-day. Beneath its murky pall lies a heart throbbing with the sense of the beautiful and good; the spirit of England's governed crop of musical souls shall never depart, and her worthy husbandmen are working harder than ever in the fallow field and lovingly sowing the seed which will bring forth a still larger and more highly cultivated harvest in the time to come.

DAVID BISPHAM.